



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
CALIFORNIA ORGANIC PRODUCTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (COPAC)**

**May 8, 2024 Meeting Minutes
Hybrid Teleconference**

2399 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95833

MEMBERS PRESENT

Matthew Grieshop – Chair
Amanda Felder – Vice Chair
Wendy Reynolds – California
Department of Public Health
(CDPH)
Mark Squire
Jeff Chean

INTERESTED PARTIES

Houston Wilson – University of
California (UC) Organic Agriculture
Institute (OAI)
Krista Marshall – UC OAI
Jane Sooby – California Certified
Organic Farmers (CCOF)
Thu Dinh – CDPH

CDFA

Marcee Yount
Danny Lee
Jefferson Scott
Andrea Cano
Scott Renteria
Pamela Rodriguez
Sara Cardoni
Kristi Garcia
Julie Lee

**REMOTE MEMBERS
PRESENT**

Phillip LaRocca
Ben Diesl
David Will
Erin Raser
Jamie Carr
Leslie Myrick
Maroka Kawamura
Stefan Parnay

MEMBERS ABSENT

Blake Alexandre

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Matthew Grieshop. Roll was called by Kristi Garcia, and a quorum was established.

ITEM 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ITEM 3: REVIEW OF JANUARY 18, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

Chair Grieshop requested a motion to approve the January 18, 2024, Meeting Minutes as presented.

MOTION: Vice Chair Amanda Felder moved to approve the January 18, 2024, Meeting Minutes as presented. Mark Squire seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with Ben Diesl, Mark Squire, Leslie Myrick, Maroka Kawamura, and Jamie Carr abstaining.

ITEM 4: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATES

Wendy Reynolds provided the CDPH Organic Program update. For organic complaints received for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023/24, 13 remain open. Five complaints remain open from FY 2022/23. For 2023, there were 2,906 licenses issued for organic processors of which 344 were new and 2,562 were renewals.

Thu Dinh presented the CDPH Organic Program's budget information. For FY 2023/24, total projected salaries and benefits are \$568,379. Total direct costs are \$142,791. Total indirect costs are \$225,168, bringing the total projected program cost to \$936,338.

ITEM 5: UPDATE ON STATE ORGANIC PROGRAM AND UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA CONTRACT DELIVERABLES

Houston Wilson, UC OAI Director, gave an update on the UC OAI contract. Krista Marshall was hired last year and serves as the Research and Policy Partnership Coordinator. Three additional academic coordinators will be hired: an Extension and Outreach Coordinator; an Education and Mentorship Coordinator; and a Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator. These vacant positions are expected to be filled by early July. Wilson stated that the UC OAI has a roadmap developed to achieve their contract objectives but stressed the importance of having all vacant positions filled to facilitate the contract deliverables.

Marshall stated that the UC OAI held a successful workshop on soil testing on organically managed systems in Sonoma County. Another workshop on soil testing on range and pasture systems will be held later in the year in Marin County.

Wilson stated that in the process of conducting the Statewide Needs Assessment – a statewide survey conducted to summarize the challenges in organic agriculture in California – stakeholders noted a need to have a centralized database of organic resources from various organizations. Marshall has been tasked with developing this resource database.

Marshall has also been leading a summary of organic acreage, which they hope to complete once fully staffed.

ITEM 6: FISCAL YEAR 2024/25 PROPOSED BUDGET

Danny Lee presented the FY 2024/25 Proposed Budget. Projected revenue is \$1,913,540 with a total proposed budget of \$3,264,946 that includes \$1,225,960 for personnel services; \$1,464,691 for operating expenses and equipment; \$549,478 for departmental expenses; a pro rata cash adjustment of \$171,211; with a gas tax credit of \$45,000, and a direct charge recovery from the Cost Share Program of \$101,395. Trends show that revenue has been increasing for various reasons, such as increased production, more consumers, and industry rebounding from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

i. State Organic Program Fund Condition

Lee provided the State Organic Program (SOP) Fund Condition update. Lee stated that as of February 2024, the beginning fund balance for FY 2023/24 was \$2,169,868. Total

revenue was \$1,172,484, and available cash was \$3,342,352. Total expenditures were \$1,529,323, cash adjustments were \$73,661, with an ending balance of \$1,739,368.

Chair Grieshop asked for a motion to approve the FY 2024/25 Proposed Budget as presented.

MOTION: Mark Squire moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2024/25 Proposed Budget as presented. Jeff Chean seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 7: PROGRAM UPDATES

i. Vacancies and Terms

Kristi Garcia provided the Vacancies and Terms report. Current vacancies include: one consumer; one technical representative; one environmental representative; five producer alternates; one wholesale distributor alternate; two processor alternates; one consumer alternate; one accredited certifier alternate; one retail representative alternate; one environmental representative alternate; and two technical representative alternates.

ii. Revenue from Registration/New Registrations

Andrea Cano presented information on organic registration fees collected by month and year. For FY 2022/23, \$1,755,379 in registration fees were collected. For FY 2023/24 as of April 11, 2024, \$1,372,511 in registration fees have been collected. A total of 466 new operations registered with the SOP in FY 2023/24; of these 332 are producers, 162 are handlers, and 16 are processors. The total number of registrants for 2023 was 4,086 registrants; of these 3,370 are producers, 1,094 are handlers, and 159 are processors.

iii. Cost Share Update

Cano provided an update on the Cost Share Program. Cano stated that at the previous COPAC meeting, it was requested that the SOP staff provided a breakdown of the number of certified operations registered with the CDFA and CDPH compared to the number of approved Cost Share applications. In FY 2022/23, 4,632 certified operations were registered with the CDFA, and 2,129 certified operations were registered with the CDPH. The number of approved Cost Share applications was 1,435.

iv. Compliance and Enforcement/Appeals Summary

Scott Renteria provided the Compliance and Enforcement/Appeals Summary. For FY 2023/24 as of April 2024, there were 98 total complaints of which 81 were investigated by SOP/CDFA, or County Agricultural Commissioners (CAC) staff; six were referred to Accredited Certifying Agents; nine were referred to CDPH; two were referred to the National Organic Program (NOP); and no complaints were referred to the Organic Input Materials Program or the Department of Pesticide Regulation. There were 1,075 total inspections: 654 of these were conducted at farmers' markets; 155 were conducted at production sites; 70 at handling facilities; seven at processing facilities; 182 at retailers; and seven at locations not within the above categories. A total of 211 samples were collected of which 197 were surveillance and 14 were investigative. Of the 197

surveillance samples, nine contained residues above tolerance levels and eight contained residues below tolerance levels. Of the 14 investigative samples, one sample tested above tolerance levels.

v. Complaint Activity Report

Renteria provided the Complaint Activity Report. For FY 2023/24 through April 2024, a total of 46 open complaints were active, in which 22 were open for more than 120 days; four were open for between 90 and 120 days; 12 were open for between 60 and 90 days; three were open for between 30 and 60 days; and five were open for less than 30 days. An additional 52 complaints had been closed.

vi. Complaint Summary Log

Renteria presented the Complaint Summary Log, detailing complaints and investigations that were assigned and closed for FY 2023/24 through April 2024.

vii. Surveillance Sampling Summary Updates

Renteria provided the Surveillance Sampling Summary updates, detailing the results of samples collected by the SOP during routine and investigative efforts. For FY 2023/24 as of April 2024, there were 197 surveillance samples: 53 at farmers' markets; 70 at production sites; and 71 at retail wholesale facilities. Of the 17 samples with residues detected: six were at farmers' markets; four at production sites; and seven at retail wholesale facilities.

ITEM 8: REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Phillip LaRocca began the discussion on regenerative agriculture. LaRocca voiced concern regarding the definition of "Regenerative Agriculture" and its potential use as a marketing term by conventional farmers. LaRocca stated that the state should include the requirement of being certified organic to be labeled as "Regenerative Agriculture". Mark Squire agreed with LaRocca and expressed concern about "Regenerative Agriculture" and the criteria currently used to certify a product as regenerative. Maroka Kawamura stated concerns that consumers would assume a product labeled certified regenerative was also certified organic.

Marcee Yount suggested that Committee Members consider submitting their own individual public comments for defining "Regenerative Agriculture" to CDFA's Regenerative Agriculture Work Group. Committee Members were also informed that COPAC could submit a recommendation letter to the CDFA Secretary.

Motion: Philip LaRocca moved to submit a recommendation letter to the CDFA Secretary requesting an enforceable definition of regenerative agriculture and for the definition to include that the product must be certified organic. Jeff Chean seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 9: ASSEMBLY BILL 2734

Chair Grieshop began the discussion on Assembly Bill (AB) 2734. AB 2734 would amend the Cannella Environmental Farming Act of 1995. The bill proposes the

following amendments: the Scientific Advisory Panel on Environmental Farming must consult with the California Organic Products Advisory Committee concerning certified organic producers and the Healthy Soils Program; the CDFA must provide grants of up to five years for on-farm demonstration projects under the Healthy Soils Program; the CDFA would be required to establish an advance payment rate of up to 50 percent for these incentive payments and consider regional input cost variations; the Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance Grant Program that would include funding for equipment sharing; and a common application for all Climate Smart Agriculture incentive programs must be established by the CDFA by January 1, 2027.

Furthermore, the bill would require the Scientific Advisory Panel to consult COPAC on the following: the number of producers certified organic pursuant to the federal Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 that receive a Healthy Soils Program grant; the education, outreach, and technical assistance needs of certified organic producers applying for Healthy Soils Program grants; and advising the State Air Resources Board on the funding guidelines for agencies that administer California climate investments to support certified organic producers in receiving Healthy Soils Program grants, including, but not limited to, removing the requirement for certified organic producers to implement new practices to qualify for Healthy Soils Program grants.

Chair Grieshop inquired on the status of the bill, to which Yount responded that AB 2734 was on the suspense file, a process to consider the fiscal impacts of a proposed bill. Chair Grieshop voiced support for the bill, particularly the amendment that would remove the requirement of a certified organic producer implementing new practices to qualify for the Healthy Soils Program grants. Squire also expressed support for the bill, stating that the amendments would be especially beneficial for small farms.

Chair Grieshop asked if COPAC needed to take any action regarding AB 2734, or if it would be mandated if passed, to which Lee responded that it would be mandated and would not need to be approved by COPAC.

Motion: Philip LaRocca moved to submit a recommendation letter to the CDFA Secretary illustrating the Committees support of Assembly Bill 2734. Chair Matthew Grieshop seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with abstentions from Ben Diesl, Jeff Cean, Vice Chair Amanda Felder, Leslie Myrick, and Maroka Kawamura. David Will left the meeting before the motion was made but a quorum was still present.

ITEM 10: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at the Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center, in Fresno County.

Agenda items will include regenerative agriculture, clarification on what defines an exempt operation, and a discussion on exemptions for retailers.

ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:27 p.m. by Chair Grieshop.

Respectfully submitted by:

Danny Lee, Supervising Special Investigator
State Organic Program